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# **A Statistical Analysis to Improve Public Perception of a State University's Police Department**

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\*The order of authorship represents that this paper was a collaborative effort.

## **ABSTRACT**

This paper addresses the question "How friendly is the University Police Department?" (UPD). This question was included in a survey given to 792 students at a Midwestern State university in October 2002 and was conducted by the university's Introduction to Criminal Justice class. Survey results indicated that 35% of the survey respondents said that UPD was "not very friendly," 27.9% indicated UPD was "somewhat friendly," 18.8% indicated UPD was "never friendly," and 3.7% indicated UPD was "very friendly." The rest of the respondents (14.7%) did not respond to the question. The proposed program recommendation outlined in this paper were developed in an effort to improve student perception of UPD. Program recommendations include the addition of a six-credit, two-semester class to the required curriculum for a Criminal Justice minor at the university, formation of a student-police association modeled after the Boy Scouts of America Explorers Program, creation of a UPD web page, and the acquisition of a surplus vehicle to provide safe and sober rides home for students who have consumed alcohol.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Community policing, according to Albanese, is defined as "A service-oriented style of law enforcement that focuses on disorder in the community, crime prevention, and fear reduction, as opposed to the traditional focus on prosecution of serious street crimes" (Albanese 2001). Community policing has become a popular subject within law enforcement agencies and the media since the mid-1980s (Community Oriented Policing Services 2002).

The idea of bringing together police and the communities they serve appears to be a good one, in theory. To say that community policing in general has solved all problems in police-community relations, however, would be unrealistic. It is difficult to point to any one explanation for this reality. An examination of community policing practices at

American universities and a comparison of university socio-demographic characteristics between the subject university and other midwestern university communities was conducted. The Index Crime Rates for several midwestern states were also examined for comparison study. The purpose of this paper is to address issues of police/student/community relations on the university campus and provide recommendations for more effective community relations.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Many sources address community policing programs in cities that are primarily urban and have high crime rates. Few, however, address community policing within university police departments, and the subject of community policing in rural communities is understudied. Rural communities are operationalized by several parameters, including demographics, economics/occupational, social structure, and culture (Weisheit et al. 1999). Weisheit et al. define "rural" as:

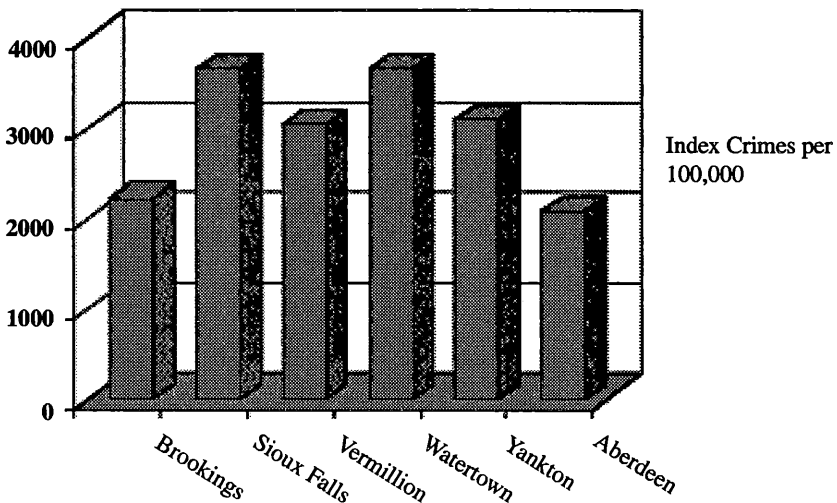
"A broad, multifaceted umbrella term referring to an array of different attributes, variables, and dimensions that, while historically correlated, cannot be meaningfully reduced to a single category or number" (Weisheit et al. 1999).

The majority of incoming freshmen to the subject university for the fall 2001-02 semester came from high schools with a graduating class size of between 25 and 99 students (Table 1). This study will define "rural communities" using the size of high school graduating class of students admitted to the university in fall 2001 (Table 1).

<b>High School Graduating Class Size</b>	<b># of New Enrollees – Fall 2001</b>
Fewer than 25	161
25 - 99	547
100 - 199	220
200 - 399	265
400 - 599	83
600 - 899	18
900 or more	20
No response	56
<b>TOTAL ENROLLEES</b>	<b>1,370</b>

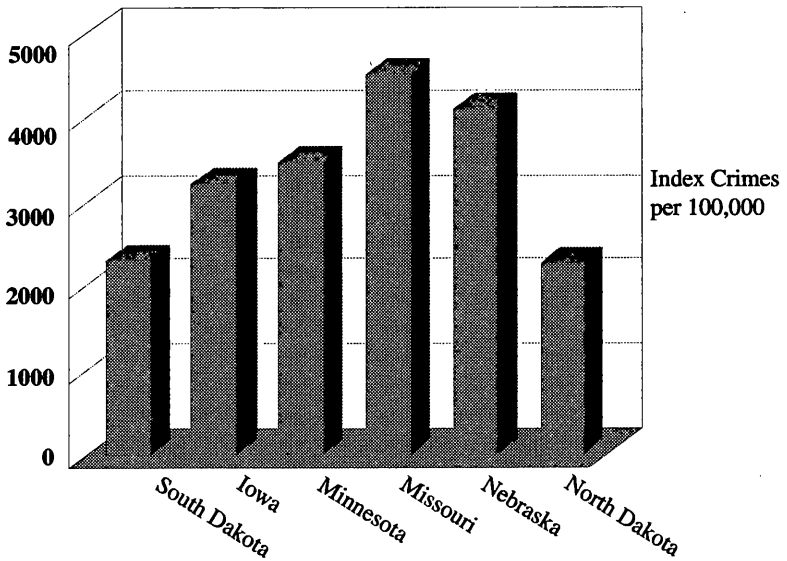
**Table 1:** Size of High School Graduating Class for Students Enrolled in Subject University for 2001-02 School Year. Source: (ACT 2001).

Crime Index rates are often used by law enforcement agencies to measure the amount of crime in a particular area. The Crime Index Offense rates in several cities in the state where the university is located, including Brookings, Sioux Falls, Aberdeen, Vermillion, and Yankton, show that, with the exception of Aberdeen, Brookings has a lower Crime Index Rate than all of the other cities (Figure 1) (SD DCI 2002). Vermillion, Aberdeen and Brookings are home to state-owned universities. Yankton has a private university and Sioux Falls, the largest city in the state, is home to two private universities. Watertown is located less than 100 miles from the city where the university is located and has a similar sized population.



**Figure 1:** UCR Crime Index reports (per 100,000) for cities in the subject state for the year 2000. (CJUS 201-02 2002)

A review of Crime Index rates in North Dakota, Nebraska, Missouri, Minnesota, Iowa and South Dakota indicates that crime rates in these states are low, particularly in North and South Dakota (Figure 2) (FBI 2002).



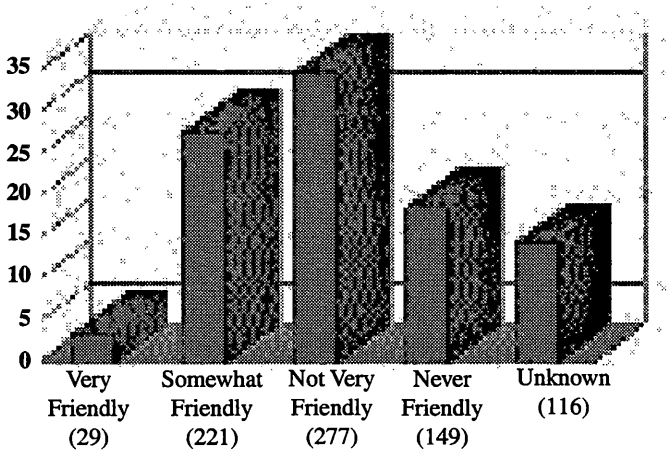
**Figure 2:** Comparison of UCR Crime Index reports for Midwestern states for year 2000 (FBI 2002)

The definition of “rural communities” and the UCR Crime Index data are presented as background information for the proposed interventions to be utilized to bring (UPD), students, and the community together from a community policing perspective. A review of literature relevant to this proposal is discussed throughout the paper, in detail, as each program is outlined.

## SUMMARY OF SURVEY RESULTS

Students enrolled in the university’s Introduction to Criminal Justice (CJUS 201-2) course administered a survey on the subject of UPD in October 2002. A total of 792 responses were compiled from this survey. Survey questions were selected by the instructor from a list of possible questions developed by class members and the book titled *Community Policing for Law Enforcement Managers* by the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority 1995). The subject of this paper focuses on one of these survey questions, as well as responses related to that question (CJUS 201-02 2002).

As the title suggests, this paper outlines several proposed programs that might be used to begin the process of improving student-UPD relations. In particular, this paper addresses the question relating to the “friendliness” of UPD officers (Figure 3). Of the 792 respondents, 35% (277) said that UPD officers were “not really friendly,” 27.9% (221) said that UPD officers were “somewhat friendly,” 18.8% (149) said UPD officers were “never friendly,” and 3.7% (29) said UPD was “very friendly.” The rest of the respondents (14.7%, 116) did not answer the question.



**Figure 3:** CJUS 201-02 Survey responses to the question: "How friendly is UPD?" (CJUS 201-02 2002)

Survey respondents were also asked to indicate their academic class at the University. Of the 792 respondents, 255 (32.3%) were freshmen, 253 (32.1%) were sophomores, 133 (16.9%) were juniors, 108 (13.7%) were seniors, 40 (5.1%) indicated their status as "other," and 3 (<.003%) did not answer the question (Table 2).

Academic Class Status	Number of Survey Respondents
Freshman	255 (32.3%)
Sophomore	253 (32.1%)
Junior	133 (16.9%)
Senior	108 (13.6%)
Other	40 (5.1)
No response	3 (.003%)

**Table 2:** Survey respondents by academic class (CJUS 201-02 2002)

Sixty seven percent (67%) or 531 of the survey respondents stated that they had been in direct contact with UPD. Those who had direct contact with UPD were asked to give the reason for the contacts (Figure 4), including Requests for Police Help (No: 88.2%, Yes: 11.8%), Traffic Violations (No: 58.8%, Yes: 41.2%), Parking Violations (No: 28.3%, Yes: 71.7%), Behavioral Warnings (No: 56.3%, Yes: 10.2%), Arrests (No: 92.8%, Yes: 7.2%), or Providing Information to UPD (No: 92.2%, Yes: 7.8%).

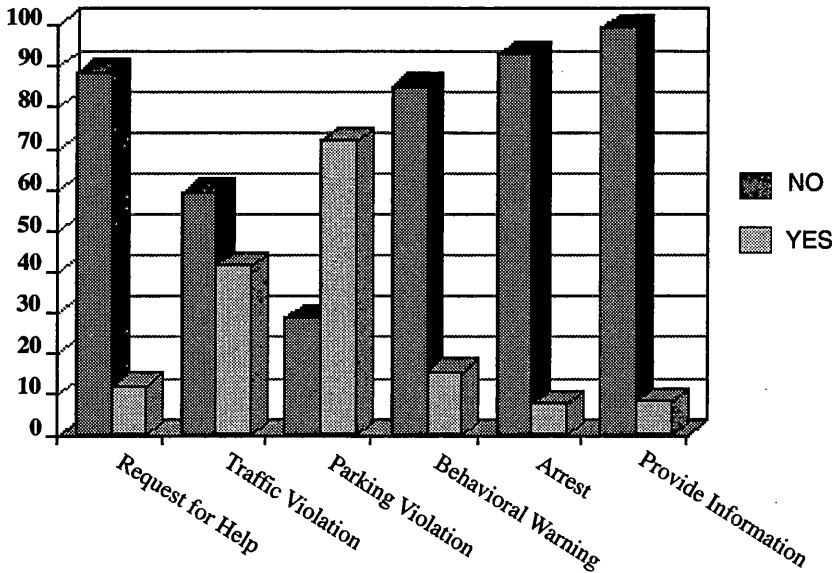


Figure 4: CJUS Survey Results: Reason for UPD Contact (CJUS 201-02 2002)

A statistical analysis of the survey indicates that the results of the cross-tabulation and the Chi-Square tests were not what the predicted outcome should have been according to the paired samples test. The paired samples test shows that students who had not come in direct contact with UPD still felt that the officers were unfriendly. The 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference shows a lower of -3.02 and an upper of -2.85 when very few students had been issued a citation by UPD. At least one of the numbers should have been positive given the low number of students who have been reprimanded by UPD. The results of the Chi-Square test showed -69.557 at a significance level of 0.001 (2-tailed test).

Count		Arrest		Total
		no	yes	
Friendly UPD	Very friendly	16	1	17
	Somewhat friendly	144	7	151
	Not really friendly	194	10	204
	Never friendly	99	20	119
	Unknown	35		35
Total		488	38	526

**Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	22.225 <sup>a</sup>	4	.000
Likelihood Ratio	21.036	4	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.574	1	.059
N of Valid Cases	526		

<sup>a</sup>. 2 cells (20.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.23.

**Figure 5: Friendly UPD Crosstabulation and Chi-Square Tests**

Freshmen comprised 32.3% of the survey respondents and 32.1% were sophomores. This survey was administered in the month of October, approximately five weeks into start of the school year. A question one might ask is “Why did the students form these overwhelmingly negative perceptions of UPD so soon after arriving at the university?”. With the exception of parking violations, the majority of the respondents stated that they had not received a citation from UPD for a violation of the law. This may be the most telling statistic of all in this survey. Individuals may experience a negative reaction to police officers in general, especially when contact with law enforcement personnel is in an official capacity, whether it be for a traffic violation, behavioral warning, or arrest. Another question one might ask is: “Why are UPD officers seen in such a negative light?”. The programs proposed in this paper will provide a vehicle for UPD to interact with students in a more positive way, with an ultimate goal of changing the perception of UPD by students at the university.

**PROPOSED PROGRAM FOR UPD**

This proposal includes three main components. A detailed discussion of each component, including estimated costs and potential funding sources, follows.

***Component One***

A program implemented at the School of Law Enforcement at Metropolitan State University located in St. Paul, Minnesota is discussed in the paper titled “Mentorship Programs: Bridging the Gap Between Theory and Practice” by Michael G. Brecci and Mary Schober Martin (Brecci & Martin 2000). Brecci and Martin discuss the importance of removing students from the classroom to get “real world” experience in the Criminal Justice field through the partnership of students with law enforcement officers. This experience was seen as mutually beneficial to all involved. A similar program, called the “Students on Patrol Program” (STOP), was implemented at Illinois State University (ISU) in 1990. This program encompasses several dimensions, including bicycle patrols



on campus, a "Residence Hall Officer Program," providing information to students about theft and burglary prevention, a fingerprinting program for children of students, and self-defense training for female students.

"STOP has been instrumental in the detection and apprehension of violators on the campus. The STOP program has also been the focus of discussion at state and national conventions on empowering students to create a safer university community. ISU is very proud of STOP. Bike patrols not only have benefits related to coast of operation and ability to silently patrol areas while almost invisible on a college campus, but have proven to be a great asset in the area of community contacts. The 'Residence Hall Officer Program' (RHOP) officers serve as direct links with the police department and are a primary source of information and programming. Officers, through programming and other activities, become familiar with the residents of the residence halls and therefore become known and accessible to the residents" (Gehrand 2000).

As this article indicates, integrating University Police and students at ISU through the STOP program has successfully improved campus conditions and police-student relations at ISU (Gehrand 2000).

In an effort to bring UPD and students together in a mutually beneficial program, the first component of this proposal involves implementation of a joint UPD/student/community organization program at the university. This program will partner students with UPD officers to assist with routine operations on campus, in exchange for valuable college credits and experience. This requires the formation of a six-credit, two-semester (minimum) course that will become part of the required curriculum for a Criminal Justice Minor.

Acronyms are used extensively in American culture. Assigning an acronym to the UPD/student/community organization that is both easy to remember and one that portrays a positive, community-based image is imperative to the program's success. The phrase "Together Everyone Achieves More," with the acronym of T.E.A.M., satisfies both of those requirements. The full name of this group will be the "Jacks Discovery T.E.A.M.," or JDT. Members of the JDT will accompany UPD officers on a variety of activities, such as routine patrols, security assistance at athletic and other events on campus, dorm security, and escort services. In order to be accepted into JDT, individuals will be required to pass a routine background check. The JDT will be a part of the university curriculum. Therefore, students must meet basic university requirements for enrollment in the JDT course, just as they do for other courses at the university.

This component is modeled after the "Explorer" program, which is funded through Boy Scouts of America. High-school aged students may join the Law Enforcement Explorers as a way of examining a career in law enforcement. Explorers work with participating police departments and are involved in a variety of police activities, including riding with officers on routine patrols, training in proper police procedure, such as handcuffing techniques and firearms training. Currently, there are approximately 720 high school students involved in the Explorer program in six cities located in the eastern

part of the study, and two cities in a neighboring state (Anderson-Horecka 2002). Individuals who have been members of the Explorers in high school will receive special consideration for acceptance into the university's JDT course. A minimum number of hours of actual on-the-job time (with UPD officers) will be required per semester in order to meet course requirements. Students will also be required to attend training with UPD staff on rules and procedures. The students will be directly supervised by a UPD officer at all times while on duty. As part of the requirements for this course, JDT members will organize and give presentations to university students on a variety of topics, which could include rape and personal assault prevention, protection of valuables, general crime prevention, and career opportunities in criminal justice. In addition, JDT could also become a part of the Criminal Justice Club that currently exists on the university campus.

In order to add a course to an existing degree program at the university, an on-line application must be filed with the state's Board of Regents. Regental approval requires applicants to demonstrate that the course will benefit both the university and students educationally and financially. Demonstrating the benefits of the JDT program to the Board of Regents will not be difficult. This course will serve the University by improving UPD/student/community relations, and it will create a more comfortable and secure campus for all students and staff. In an era of budget tightening, JDT can help accomplish this goal at minimal cost to the university. Adding JDT to the university curriculum will also benefit students by giving them an opportunity for additional training to enhance their degree program, and give them valid real-world law enforcement experience. Students who participate in JDT will be more marketable to prospective employers upon completion of their degree program.

## **ESTIMATED COSTS**

The costs to add a course to the university curriculum are limited to staff training on proper University procedures regarding instructional guidelines. This training will be provided by the university. The state Board of Regents administers the Dwight D. Eisenhower Professional Development Program (Public Law 110-382). This program provides 84% of the funding required for implementation of a program such as the JDT course. It also provides instructors, administrators and staff with high quality, sustained and intensive personal development training. Applications for funds are collected and evaluated on a competitive basis. Awards from this program could be used to train instructors, officers and students, and provide funds for travel to allow staff and students to attend training seminars and workshops (SD BOR 2002). Costs for teaching materials required for this course are difficult to estimate. Possible expenses could include textbooks and other teaching materials, which are chosen by each individual instructor. Therefore, it is difficult to determine what these costs would be until the course is actually added to the university curriculum. Students who enroll in the JDT course will pay the same tuition rates as for other courses at the university. Students may be required to pay additional fees beyond university-mandated fees to cover costs for other items necessary for the JDT class (i.e. items of clothing, equipment belts).

**Background checks:** \$39.00 per person for JDT students  
**Source of funds:** UPD Funds  
**Other costs:** Unknown

### *Component Two*

The University Police Department currently does not have a web site. The second component of this proposal is the creation of a UPD web site, which will be added to the university's main web site. College students in the 21st century are very Internet savvy, as shown by the following statistics on Internet use by young adults and rural Americans:

“The study ‘A Nation Online: How Americans are Expanding Their Use of the Internet,’ published by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration and the Economic and Statistics Administration found that 143 million Americans (54 percent of the population) used the Internet in September, 2001. Ninety percent of children between the ages of 5 and 17 (48 million) now use computers, the study found. Three-quarters of 14-17 year olds and 65 percent of 10 to 13-year olds use the Internet. From 1998 to 2001, Internet use among people living in rural households has grown at an annual rate of 24 percent, and the percentage of Internet users living in rural areas is nearly even with the national average (53 percent versus 54 percent).” (CyberAtlas 2002)

Creating a UPD web page will be a key component of the strategy to improve relations between UPD, students and the community, access to information and guidelines, and promoting a more positive image of the department. While developing the concept for this component, a simple Internet search yielded several very good university police department web sites (google.com 2002). These web sites contain a wealth of information and ideas that could be used to assist in the development of the new UPD web site. One example is the University of Oklahoma's Police Department site (UOPD 2002). This web site is an outstanding source of information on several topics relative to university community policing, including crime prevention, personal and Internet safety, drug and alcohol abuse awareness, first-aid and health information. Another high quality example of a UPD web site is maintained by the University of Texas at Dallas police department (UT-Dallas 2002). Their web page includes features such as the “Ask-A-Cop” and “Silent Witness” programs for student use. One feature on the University of Minnesota-Mankato Security Department's web site advertises free vehicle unlocking and jumpstart services for students on their campus (MSUM Security 2003). The University of Texas at Dallas and Minnesota State University-Mankato web sites both include an on-line parking violation appeal form. This subject will be discussed in detail in the following section.

Our study indicates that citations for parking violations are a source of ill will between UPD and students (CJUS 201-02 2002). Conclusions of an interview with the UPD Office Manager show that an Internet-based parking ticket appeal could improve UPD perception by students. It is not unusual for students to feel animosity toward the

UPD office when students visit UPD in person to appeal a parking violation (Behrens 2003). Utilizing the Internet to file appeals will provide “neutral ground” for students who wish to contest a parking violation and will allow UPD to address more pressing issues. It will also assist students by making the appeal process more accessible given their demanding schedules. Of the CJUS class survey respondents, 71.7% (567) said that parking violations were the reason for direct contact with UPD (CJUS 201-02 2002). An Internet appeal process will be a step forward for the UPD and university as a whole, making students less apprehensive about interacting with officers and staff. The goal of this paper is to improve student perceptions of UPD and this proposal could become an important, easily accomplished, and cost-effective step toward reaching this goal. Table 4 highlights key features found on selected university police department web pages.

University Name	Safety Awareness Info	Self Defense & Rape Defense	Means to contact UPD	Parking Ticket Appeal	Crime Tip Line	Crime Prevention Info	Alcohol & Drug Abuse Info
Univ. of Texas at Dallas	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Univ. of Oklahoma	X	X	X		X		X
Univ. of WI at Madison			X	X	X	X	X
Millersville Univ. (PA)	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Minnesota State Univ. Mankato	X		X	X	X	X	

**Table 4:** Features of selected university police department web pages. Sources: (UT-Dallas 2002), (UOPD 2002), (UWPD 2003), (MUPD 2002), (MSUM Security 2003).

**ESTIMATED COSTS FOR WEB PAGE DEVELOPMENT**

Software purchase: Dreamweaver™ (required by university):.....\$350.00  
 Student (Work Study) salary for web page creation for one semester:.....\$250.00  
*100 hours x \$2.50/hour (Hourly salary = \$10.00/Actual cost to UPD is  
 25% of the total salary for Federal Work Study-eligible students)*  
 Total Cost:.....\$600.00

## SOURCE OF FUNDS

A potential funding source for development of the UPD web site is the Community Oriented Policing Services (C.O.P.S.) Grant Program, which was created in 1994. The C.O.P.S. grant program:

“provides funding for advance community policing in jurisdictions of all sizes across the country. Community policing represents a shift from more traditional law enforcement in that it focuses on prevention of crime and the fear of crime on a very local basis. Community policing puts law enforcement professionals on the streets and assigns them a beat, so they can build mutually beneficial relationships with the people they serve. By earning the trust of the members of their communities and making those individuals stakeholders in their own safety, community policing makes law enforcement safer and more efficient, and makes America safer” (Community Oriented Policing Services 2002).

### *Component Three*

The third component of this proposal is integrated with creation of the Jacks Discovery T.E.A.M. (JDT). Together, these components will enhance the potential of UPD and JDT to create goodwill among the student population, while enhancing the safety of the entire community.

Alcohol use is prevalent on this university's campus, as it is on many other university campuses across the United States. Underage drinking is also widespread on this university campus. In 2001, 259 arrests were made on campus by UPD for liquor law violations, and 581 liquor law violation arrests were made by local and state police in the university community (University Division of Student Affairs 2001). A film titled *Primary Influence* discusses underage drinking by teens as follows:

“Statistics show that young people are drinking younger and more frequently than previous years, often beginning around the age of 13. The average number of alcoholic drinks among college students is 5, according to a recent survey. Among those under 21, it is 5.5 drinks, and among those 21 and older it is 4.2 drinks” (ImageMaster Productions Inc. 2000).

The March 2002 issue of the *Journal of American College Health* published data obtained from a survey of more than 10,000 full-time students at 119 universities in 38 states and the District of Columbia. The findings of this study indicated: “Underage students drank alcohol less frequently than older students but were more likely to drink to excess. Such students consumed 48% of the alcohol that undergraduates reported drinking” (Marklein 2002).

The legalities of underage drinking will not be discussed in this paper; however, everyone is aware of the dangers of drinking and driving. To address this issue in the university community, JDT will partner with UPD to obtain a Federal or state surplus

passenger van, which will be called the JDT "F.A.N." (Friends are Nice) Van. This van, operated by JDT members, will provide free, sober rides home for university students who have consumed alcohol. Students who need a ride can simply call a local phone number (688-TEAM, for example), which will be received in a central JDT location. JDT F.A.N. Van drivers will be dispatched to the students' locations via cell phones, and students will be driven to their homes, with no questions asked. JDT members will be required to operate the F.A.N. Van for a minimum number of hours per semester in order to meet JDT course requirements.

In order for such a program to be successful, it must be marketed to the students. There are a number of ways this could be accomplished. Public Service Announcements (PSAs) are an excellent way of advertising a service such as the JDT F.A.N. Van. There are two AM radio stations and two FM radio stations in the city that can be utilized for this purpose. Flyers and business cards will be created and distributed around the campus and in the city. The business cards will also be placed in each bar in the city on a regular basis. Bar staff can distribute the business cards to patrons as they enter the establishment, and business cards and flyers can be posted in highly visible areas throughout the establishments. In addition, small refrigerator magnets will be created and distributed to students who attend fall and spring course registration on the university campus. Local newspaper media and the weekly university newspaper will be contacted about the JDT and F.A.N. Van program so that a feature story can be written about the program to provide region-wide, no-cost publicity.

While on duty, each JDT F.A.N. Van staff member will wear a t-shirt to identify them as members of JDT. Logos have been designed for the shirts and are included in Appendix A. The following table outlines estimated costs for the JDT F.A.N. Van.

T-shirts for JDT members (4-color screen print, 60 shirts @ \$13.50 each Graphics Company)	\$ 810.00
500 Business cards for distribution	70.00
Magnet paper for printing 10,000 - 2" x 2" magnets (Business supply company)	2,000.00
Four Cell phones for JDT (Cellular phone company)	40.00/month
Land Phone Line (Telecommunication company)	22.00/month
Routine Vehicle Maintenance	30.00/month
Van Detailing (3 color vinyl appliques -Graphics company)	150.00
Paper and copying costs for flyers produced at no cost by local printing company	-0-

**Table 5:** Estimated costs for JDT F.A.N. Van

## **SOURCE OF FUNDS**

Some of the costs outlined above could be covered by UPD departmental funds. The above figures do not take into account possible donations and/or discounts that could be obtained from these and other local businesses. The city's business community has historically been very generous to student groups. It is anticipated that most of these costs will be absorbed by area businesses. Additional funds could be obtained from fundraisers such as a local pizza restaurant's fundraising program, which donates a portion of an evening's proceeds for groups whose personnel work as servers in the restaurant for that evening.

## **CONCLUSION**

The overwhelmingly negative perception of the University Police Department by students, as shown in the Criminal Justice class survey, is troubling and should cause concern for the entire campus community. Improving UPD/student/community relations should be the focus of the entire campus community. The components proposed in this paper can be used as a first step in the right direction toward improving UPD/student/community relations. Creating a more positive image of the University Police Department and making the campus a safer and more comfortable place will boost the image of the university and the community as a whole.

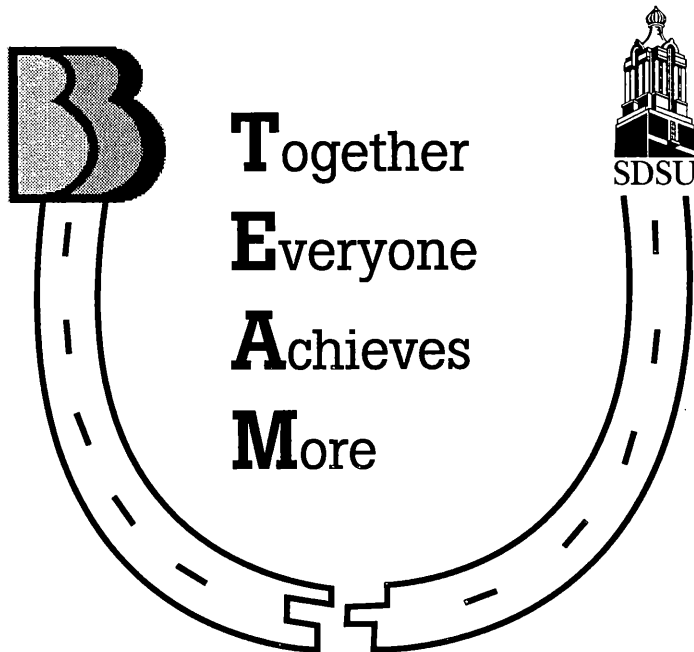
## **APPENDIX A**

### **JACKS DISCOVERY TEAM T-SHIRT DESIGNS**

DESIGN FOR BACK OF T-SHIRT:

**J**acks  
**D**iscovery  
**T**eam  
**688-TEAM**

DESIGN FOR T-SHIRT FRONT, UPPER LEFT CHEST AREA:



\* Designs created by co-author Terri French.

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